



Myths

All bats carry rabies.

Bat feces (guano) are poisonous to humans.

Bats are aggressive and try to bite people.

Bats are dirty and covered in bugs.

It's okay to kill bats that get into buildings.

Bats are blind.

Facts

Less than half of 1% of bats carry rabies. You cannot get rabies from simply being in the same room as a bat. If you are bitten by a rabid bat, you can be easily treated with medication administered soon after contact. Any concerns about rabies should be directed to the rabies hotline.

Bat guano is used as an important fertilizer. However, a certain fungus can grow on bat guano, and can cause histoplasmosis if disturbed and inhaled. Histoplasmosis occurs naturally in the environment, and exposure is preventable with a face respirator in the presence of large amounts of guano.

Bats do not attack humans. However, if threatened or cornered, they may use their teeth to defend themselves. Rabid bats typically will not bite unless handled.

Bats groom themselves often and keep themselves very clean. There are certain specially adapted parasites that are sometimes found on bats.

There is no need to kill bats that accidentally get into buildings! You should never spray or strike bats. Bats should be isolated to one room with an opening to the outside. Lights should remain on until the bat goes back outside. If a bat needs to be submitted for rabies testing, it should not be released from a building.

Bats are able to see very well, but they also rely on echolocation to find their prey and avoid obstacles in the dark.

Bats are related to birds.

Nope! Although both groups fly, they are actually *very* distantly related to each other. Some major differences between the two groups include:

- Bats have fur, and birds have feathers
- Bats have teeth, and birds have beaks
- Bats' finger bones move their wings, and birds' arm bones move their wings
- Bats nurse their young, and birds regurgitate for their young

Bats are pests and have no place in residential areas.

Bats actually serve many important ecological functions that humans can benefit from! They eat insects that are pests to humans and agricultural activity. Some bats even help with plant pollination and seed dispersal. Bat feces are high in phosphate and nitrogen and can be used as fertilizer.

All bats suck blood.

Bats around the world have a variety of diets, eating insects, fruit, nectar, fish, frogs, and mice. Only three species feed solely on blood. All bat species that live in the D.C. area are insectivorous.